



The State of New Jersey

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*A Strategy for Safe Streets and Neighborhoods*

Governor  
Jon S. Corzine

# NEW JERSEY

## *A Strategy for Safe Streets and Neighborhoods*

To the People of New Jersey:

Violent crime threatens the safety of our State's residents and the vitality of our cities and towns. Criminal gangs, fueled by the revenues of drug distribution and armed with guns illegally obtained, contribute significantly to this threat and expose too many of our young people to actual or threatened violence. This Strategy for Safe Streets and Neighborhoods is a comprehensive approach to dealing with gangs, youth violence, and illegal guns: improving the delivery of the support and services that prevent our children from becoming delinquent; targeting and intensifying law enforcement's focus on those who perpetrate gang and street-level violence; and working to keep those individuals released from prisons and detention centers from engaging in future criminality.

The plan for a safer New Jersey has three pillars: enforcement, prevention, and reentry. We recognize that law enforcement cannot do it alone; arresting people, with nothing more, will not solve these problems. Our young people deserve, and require, more. Make no mistake, however: illegal gang activity and criminal gun possession are serious problems, and will not be tolerated. For those individuals and organizations that commit gang or gun violence, the law enforcement response will be immediate and severe.

By the time that a young person becomes involved with law enforcement, many earlier opportunities for prevention and intervention have passed. That is why effective prevention programs aimed at reducing the risk factors of delinquency for at-risk youth form the foundation for this strategy. Preventing the commission of crime by formerly incarcerated offenders, an all-too-prevalent type of crime, forms the third pillar of the strategy. Currently, almost two-thirds of the inmates leaving State prisons will be arrested within five years of being released from prison. These repeat offenders present a serious public safety issue. Accordingly, the strategy sets forth several approaches to reduce recidivism.

The ideas and approaches included here reflect the tremendous efforts and progress that people in our communities have made in addressing these issues. As a State, we want to support those programs that work to make our communities safer, and to make sure that we do so in the most coordinated, cost-effective manner possible. In identifying these approaches, we listened to community members, police officers, service providers, children, elected officials throughout the State, and countless other dedicated professionals and citizens who work every day to make our communities safer. We asked for their ideas about what works in combating violence, what needed resources are or are not available, and how the State could work with them and local agencies to most effectively address violence, with a particular focus on gangs and gun crime.

We have listened, and now we ask you to do your part in solving these problems. Local and state governments will take the lead, but it is the individual members of the community – who donate their time to young people, who assist in maintaining the safety and vitality of our communities – who will make these strategies succeed.

This strategy reflects the State's commitment to helping our citizens to live and work in our communities, free of the fear of violence. It changes the way the State pursues that goal. In an unprecedented collaboration, our State agencies will work together in allocating more than \$35 million to supporting prevention programs. The State is also contributing more than \$10 million

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to law enforcement initiatives and support. For reentry, non-criminal justice agencies will refocus more than \$3 million to coordinate with extensive and redeployed resources being provided by the Department of Corrections and the State Parole board. None of this is new money. Rather, it is the coordinated re-direction of existing state and federal grant money that we will put behind our goal of making New Jersey safer.

Government works best when it works together, and this strategy breaks down – in several instances for the first time – many of the artificial barriers to agency collaboration. It engages almost every single state department in our common goal, and the sheer number of agencies involved directly reflects the priority I have given this initiative. Working together with the people of our State, and putting our collective resources and efforts behind those programs and approaches that work, we can make our communities safer.

Jon S. Corzine  
Governor

**I. ENFORCEMENT: Targeting gangs and gang members who engage in violence and carry guns**

- a. Encourage and assist local police departments to move towards intelligence-led, data-driven policing by requiring agencies to submit crime data on a monthly basis.
- b. Perform local assessments of gang problems and create interagency task forces to target gangs and gun violence.
- c. Stop the flow of illegal and deadly guns into the State and vigorously investigate all shootings.
- d. Combat witness intimidation through witness protection programs and minimizing reliance on civilian witnesses.
- e. Involve community in identifying law enforcement priorities and strategies and preventing violence.

**II. PREVENTION: Focus on giving young people the tools and resources to avoid delinquency, gangs, and criminality**

- a. Coordinate among all levels of government.
- b. Assist with local level planning and implementation.
- c. Prioritize jobs and training.
- d. Promote the adoption of best practices and model programs.
- e. Require evaluation and accountability.

**III. REENTRY: Focus on reducing the recidivism rate to improve public safety and save resources**

- a. Coordinate and create accountability for reentry through creation of Reentry Oversight Committee.
- b. Launch a reentry Demonstration Project, with focused programming for up to 1,300 offenders.
- c. Increase support and opportunities for youth returning home from Juvenile Justice Commission institutions.
- d. Address unique needs of reentering ex-offenders through systemwide change.
- e. Modify certain barriers to reintegration, with a focus on relieving impediments for persons who establish rehabilitation.

**IV. Oversight and Accountability**

### **Safe Streets, Safe Neighborhoods**

Today, violent crime represents one of the State's most significant public safety problems. While other major crimes are down across the State, murder and weapons possession are trending in the opposite direction. Criminal street gangs are responsible for a major part of this violence. Gang violence results in too many youth in our cities and towns left seriously wounded or dead. In 2004, homicide was the second leading cause of death for young people between the ages of 15 and 24. Moreover, gang violence often strikes innocent victims who happen to be at the wrong place at the wrong time, thus creating and perpetuating a generalized fear in the community.

The problem of criminal street gangs and the violence they perpetrate and perpetuate is not limited to urban areas. In the New Jersey State Police Street Gang Survey, released today as a part of the Strategy for a Safe Streets and Neighborhoods and compiled by surveying local law enforcement officers on the scope and nature of gang presence in their community, 43% of the municipalities reported a gang presence. In some of these cities and towns, the total number of gang members may be less than 20; at the other extreme, some cities report multiple gangs each with memberships of 100 or more. The survey indicates that more than three major gangs are present in more than 100 municipalities. The survey also reveals that these gang members are engaging primarily in violent and narcotics-distribution offenses. As the survey also shows, gangs are not an urban problem nor unique to one part of our State; rather, gangs cross urban and suburban lines, and are present in 20 of our 21 counties.

Serious problems require serious attention and, where necessary, new approaches. It is not enough to continue to do things in the way they were done before if we can do them better in a different way. We must use available information more intelligently and, where gaps exist in what information is available, we must determine how to fill those gaps. We must increase coordination, communication, and collaboration between and among different agencies, organizations, and, most importantly, the affected communities. And, if we are truly serious about solving these problems, we must have critical evaluations of programs and policies and a willingness to change those programs and policies that could work better.

#### **Between 2001-2005, Statewide adult arrests increased in two categories**

- Murder increased by 8% (236 to 255)
- Weapons offenses increased by 23.7% (3674 to 4544)

#### **Between 2001-2005, Statewide juvenile arrests increased in three categories**

- Murder increased by 15% (25 to 30)
- Robbery increased by 22.4% (1176 to 1439)
- Weapons offenses increased by 16.4% (1720 to 2002)

#### **Majority of violent crime occurs in 20 municipalities**

- 78.9% of all murders
- 54.8% of all arrests with firearm
- 81% of all gang-related homicides

This strategy focuses on three areas critical to addressing violent crime: enforcement, prevention, and reentry. Law enforcement will target and prosecute those who engage in violence, and in particular gang and gun-related violence, but the goals of the strategy are much broader. For effective prevention, we will focus on at-risk youth and on fostering the protective factors that are known to lead to resiliency against delinquency, such as involvement with positive peer group activities, good relationships with peers, economically sustainable communities, and neighborhood cohesion. We will also focus on reducing risk factors that are known to correlate to problem behavior, such as truancy, antisocial behavior, gun possession, teen parenthood, and early onset of drug use. Reentry efforts will focus on providing persons being released from prison the skills and necessary support and supervision to prevent them from committing new crimes.

Across these areas, several fundamental principles guide the initiatives, programs, and actions that comprise the strategy. First, the implementation of the strategy, and every component part of the strategy, will seek to use data and analysis to identify problems, develop approaches to address those problems, and to assess the efficacy of those approaches. Second, the State's role is to support and to assist its local partners and communities in identifying and implementing the programs appropriate to a given community. Given the diversity and variations in our cities and towns, what works in one municipality may not work in another. Third, it requires that local, county, and State agencies communicate more fully with one another in the development, delivery, and assessment of anti-gang, anti-gun strategies. Fourth, the strategy imposes accountability at all levels. The State will subject its own programs and initiatives to the same rigorous evaluation as to effectiveness to which it will subject other programs that seek state funding and grant assistance in addressing gang and gun violence.

Together, the principles and the strategy reflect a renewed commitment to preventing and addressing youth violence in a way that maximizes effectiveness and accountability. Public safety requires an intensive focus on these issues; fundamental principles of good government require that the components of the strategy be subject to assessment and evaluation.



## I.

## ENFORCEMENT

### TARGETING GANGS AND GANG MEMBERS WHO ENGAGE IN VIOLENCE AND CARRY GUNS

Local, county, and State law enforcement have made tremendous gains in addressing the State's crime problems. From 2001 to 2005, total crime and nonviolent crime decreased significantly. Over that same period, however, the number of murders increased. In 2005, Trenton and Camden each had more than 30 homicides; in 2006, Newark experienced 106 homicides. Both Camden and Trenton are on pace to have more murders in 2007 than in 2006. Similarly, arrests for gun offenses also increased. A study by the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services concluded that almost 40% of all homicides in the State in 2003-2004 were gang-related. Combined, the increase in homicides and the increasing prevalence of illegal guns present a serious and pervasive threat to public safety that warrants targeted and focused law enforcement efforts. As part of the strategy, State departments are re-allocating more than \$10 million in existing funds to support criminal justice initiatives.

In several criminal prosecutions that the Division of Criminal Justice has handled, state, local, and federal law enforcement have coordinated their efforts to take down statewide or regional criminal gangs, and those collaborations will continue as part of this overall strategy. Indeed, enhanced coordination and cooperation is a key component of this approach. Also critical to our approach is a law enforcement strategy that targets the most dangerous members of criminal gangs and focuses on preventing the flow of illegal guns into their hands.

To that end, the strategy pursues the following action items:

- Action 1. Encourage and assist law enforcement agencies to move towards intelligence-led, data-driven policing strategies by requiring agencies to submit crime data on a monthly basis.**
- Action 2. Perform local assessments of the gang problem and create interagency task forces to target violent gangs.**
- Action 3. Stop the flow of illegal and deadly guns into the State and vigorously investigate shootings.**
- Action 4. Combat witness intimidation through witness protection and minimizing reliance on civilian witnesses.**
- Action 5. Involve community in identifying law enforcement priorities and strategies and preventing violence.**

## **Action 1. Encourage and assist law enforcement agencies to move towards intelligence-led, data-driven policing strategies by requiring agencies to submit crime data on a monthly basis.**

The Attorney General will require, for the first time, that municipal law enforcement agencies collect, and provide crime data to the State Police Regional Operations Intelligence Center (“ROIC”) on a monthly basis. This will allow us to identify and analyze local and regional crime trends, and respond to them quickly, flexibly, and effectively. The technological and analytical capabilities of the ROIC make it a critical tool and resource in collecting, analyzing, and disseminating intelligence information statewide.

- **Assessments of local police agency technologies and identification of systems necessary for modern policing** – Many police agencies in this State utilize outdated, inadequate dispatch and records management technologies incapable of supporting intelligence-led policing. The Attorney General will collaborate with a number of municipalities and local law enforcement agencies to assess local needs, identify solutions and potential municipal, local, and State funding sources, and assist with installation and implementation of upgraded technologies.
- **Installation and integration of video surveillance into policing** – Funding for one-time grants to police departments for video surveillance equipment will be available through a competitive grant process. Video technology, when utilized fully, will allow local police agencies to increase their presence throughout communities, as well as assist municipalities in responding to any variety of traffic, weather, or other emergencies. The participating agencies will also provide the video feeds to the ROIC, allowing statewide analysis and response. Where local police departments can identify separate funding sources, the Attorney General’s office will offer to provide technical assistance, training, or project management assistance to these departments.
- **Collection and analysis of crime data at local, county, and state level** – Currently, no timely collection and analysis of crime data at a regional or state level takes place. Indeed, most municipalities in the state that collect and analyze crime data do not have the capability of doing it in near real-time. As an integral part of the approach to gang and gun violence, the Attorney General will mandate monthly reporting of some offenses.
- **Increased use of national information databases** – Any given crime or crime scene can generate biological evidence (such as blood), ballistics evidence (such as shell casings), and, where a gun is recovered, valuable data about the history of the gun (such as where, when, and by whom the gun was purchased). National databases contain valuable information about each of these types of evidence that assist in solving crimes and identifying perpetrators.



### **Action 2. Perform local assessments of gang problems and create interagency task forces to target violent gangs and gun violence.**

Although violent gangs are prevalent in many of our communities, their composition and the threats they pose in each community vary. In some communities, one cohesive group will dominate the criminal narcotics distribution, and violence in the community results predominantly from the group's efforts to repel others trying to invade their territory. In another community, a number of loosely knit gangs may fight other groups for dominance or market share, as well as engage in internal violence among the groups' members. Strategies that might prove effective in one situation may be largely ineffectual in another, depending on the nature of the community's gang problem. Local and county law enforcement are the most knowledgeable and in the best position to assess a local gang problem. Often, however, a gang's activities will spread across municipal boundaries and jurisdictions, requiring cooperation and collaboration between agencies.

- **Develop standardized and workable definition of gang activity** – The Attorney General will work with local, county, and State law enforcement partners to create a definition of “gang activity” that adequately identifies gang-related crimes while accounting for local variability. Using this definition, the ROIC will collect, analyze, and disseminate intelligence about those crimes determined to be gang-related or involving a gun.
- **Define and assess scope and nature of local gang problem** – The Attorney General will require that local agencies assess their municipalities' gang problem. The identification of violent groups and members likely to engage in violence or carry a firearm are critical components of the assessment. The assessment will also identify those locations where crime problems, and especially gang-related violence problems, are most acute.
- **Ensure that law enforcement agencies coordinate investigations** – Increased intelligence sharing among law enforcement partners will allow agencies to make certain that their enforcement activities do not conflict with the activities of other agencies. The Attorney General will require that agencies make the appropriate inquiry to ensure that other agencies are not also investigating the target of a planned arrest or electronic surveillance.
- **Focus mission of county narcotics task forces on street gangs engaged in violence, gun possession, and narcotics distribution** – Each county has an existing narcotics task force, created pursuant to the Statewide Narcotics Action Plan. Given the nexus and interplay between narcotics, criminal gangs, and guns and gun violence, these task forces are best situated to focus on these related problems. Accordingly, the Attorney General is directing the county prosecutors to reconfigure the task forces to focus their efforts on those individuals responsible for gang and gun violence.
- **Appoint Statewide Gang, Gun, and Violent Crime Coordinator** – The Attorney General will appoint a statewide coordinator to collaborate with law enforcement agencies in the implementation of this strategy, to formulate and assess statewide strategies for the investigation and prosecution of gang members, and to advise the Attorney General on gang, gun, and violence-related issues.

### **Action 3. Stop the flow of illegal and deadly guns into the State and vigorously investigate all shootings.**

Guns flowing illegally into New Jersey exact an unacceptable toll on our cities and our young people. Criminal street gangs and illegal firearms make a lethal combination, and require a law enforcement response on both fronts.

- **Investigate and prosecute those who bring guns illegally into this state** – Pursuant to a historic agreement between New Jersey and the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), law enforcement in this state will begin to more effectively trace the sources of illegal firearms through real-time electronic access to the ATF's eTrace system. This is the first agreement of its kind between the ATF and any state. The agreement gives the State Police real-time access to federal databases that help identify the source purchasers, source states, source vendors, types of weapons, dates of first purchases and individuals trafficking firearms into or within New Jersey. The information is so valuable to State and regional law enforcement efforts that the Attorney General will require that all law enforcement agencies enter all guns recovered or seized into eTrace.
- **Target those individuals that have committed or are most likely to commit gun violence** – Law enforcement will target for proactive investigations and vigorous prosecution those individuals that pose the greatest threat to public safety: those that commit or threaten violence and those that carry a firearm. For those individuals identified as priority targets due to gun violence, law enforcement will employ all investigative tools, techniques, and resources to arrest, detain, and convict those individuals.
- **Create shooting response teams to vigorously investigate gang-related shootings** – In several areas around the state, multi-agency, collaborative teams have reduced gun violence by investigating each shooting with the same intensity and resources afforded a homicide investigation. These efforts have increased public safety by reducing gun violence and intensifying investigations into such shootings. The county prosecutor will decide whether to create a shooting response team in a given county, and the region within which it operates, based on their local gang assessment and shooting prevalence and distribution. Additionally, we will continue to implement Operation CeaseFire, a program that combines complete investigations of shootings with a sustained community outreach component.
- **Mandatory reporting of all shootings** – Accurate and timely information about the incidence of gun violence is crucial to developing, assessing, and modifying anti-gun violence strategies. Such information is currently unavailable at a statewide level. Accordingly, the Attorney General will mandate near-real time centralized reporting of all incidences of shootings, including any aggravated assaults, attempted murders, or murders with a firearm.
- **Legislation** – The Legislature is an important partner in the fight against violent crime. The Governor and the Attorney General will ask the Legislature to significantly stiffen penalties for illegal gun possession, witness intimidation offenses, and other gang- and gun-related crimes; to create new offenses and to pass pending bills that would give law enforcement the tools needed to aggressively prosecute gang and gun-related conduct; and to establish laws to protect victim and witness personal information.

## **Action 4. Combat witness intimidation through witness protection programs and minimizing reliance on civilian witnesses.**

Witness intimidation perverts the criminal justice system and constitutes an unacceptable but real deterrent to the cooperation of witnesses with law enforcement. The strategy calls on law enforcement to develop effective, flexible witness protection programs that serve the needs of victims and witnesses of gang violence. Additionally, it calls on law enforcement to develop cases and strategies that minimize the use of civilian witnesses who may be susceptible to intimidation.

- **Evaluate existing witness protection programs and modify or create programs as necessary** – Currently, the State has two witness protection programs, one administered by the State Police and one by the Division of Criminal Justice. The Attorney General will ask law enforcement professionals to assess both witness protection programs to determine whether they are meeting the needs and demands of victims and witnesses, to review the programs in comparison to other states, and to advise as to their conclusions. The Attorney General will then modify existing programs, or create new programs, as necessary, to best provide witness protection services to victims and witnesses. The Attorney General will ask for a completed review by March 1, 2008.
- **Partner with Department of Community Affairs to expand housing options** – For the first time, the Department of Community Affairs has agreed to make available a number of housing choice vouchers for witnesses and victims of violent crime. The vouchers will allow the victim or witness recipients to choose housing anywhere in the country that meets certain requirements established by the federal government and provides substantial rental assistance.
- **Minimize the importance of civilian witnesses in prosecuting a defendant** – The strategy calls on law enforcement agencies to reduce the opportunity for witness intimidation by relying on law enforcement officers as witnesses. For instance, rather than relying upon a statement by a witness that a targeted individual had a gun, the law enforcement agency could build a case against the target sufficient to provide reasonable suspicion for a stop or probable cause for a warrant. Prosecutions for weapons offenses, which require only proof of unlawful possession and often only police officer witnesses, can be supported in this way. As part of this strategy, the Governor and Attorney General will ask the Legislature to enact several new weapons offenses, and to modify some existing offenses, to punish more severely those who illegally carry guns.

## **Action 5. Involve community in identifying law enforcement priorities and strategies and preventing violence.**

Effective law enforcement requires the involvement of the community in identifying priorities, developing strategies, and allocating resources. The active involvement and participation of citizens and community organizations provide law enforcement with a clear idea of community concerns and priorities.

- **.Work with community to identify priorities and targets** – Along with a focus on violent gangs and illegal guns, law enforcement must respond to the public safety concerns of a community in order to assist the community in feeling safer. Active participation of the community in identifying neighborhood concerns will lead to better lines of communication between the community and law enforcement, which, in turn, can provide valuable information about past, current, or planned criminal activities.
- **Community outreach to prevent retaliation** – In Operation CeaseFire communities, outreach workers engage high-risk victims of gun violence and their families in a meaningful dialogue about stopping retaliatory shootings and ending the violence. Through their continuous presence, trained outreach workers build sufficient trust with victims and their families, many of whom have criminal histories. By providing Operation CeaseFire educational materials, referrals to needed resources such as drug treatment, social services, faith services, and educational resources, the trained outreach workers help to de-escalate and defuse tense situations before they turn deadly. The Attorney General will also make the Operation CeaseFire outreach materials available to other municipalities.

